

A Letter from the Director

The coronavirus pandemic dominated much of 2020, and we were met with many new challenges, hardships, and change. This year, the pandemic continued to create challenges, but we decided to create something new, something positive. We focused on creating a healthier you. And not just a physically healthier you, but rather a healthier you mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. We created hope with COVID-19 vaccines. We created new connections during a time of isolation. We created opportunities through new educational programs, and growth through expanded services and additional staff.

The Butler VA Health Care System's 2021 Annual Report highlights many achievements from our extraordinary year, but it focuses on the ways we created happiness, hope, connections, opportunities, and growth for our Veterans and their families. I encourage you to read through this year's Annual Report and learn about the many ways we're creating a healthier you.

Thank you to everyone for your ongoing patience and support this year, and we look forward to serving and seeing you (in-person and virtually) at the Butler VA in 2022.



Butler VA's Leadership Team





Creating a Healthier You

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This year the Butler VA Health Care System utilized creative arts more than ever before—19 creative art workshops were held for Veterans, the first ever Creative Arts Festival took place, and a special art display was put together for Memorial Day. Creating art can improve overall health and wellness, being both therapeutic and healing. In addition to creating art, the Butler VA also focused on ways to create new, positive, and healthy opportunities for Veterans in 2021.

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Create A Healthier You

Creating Happiness

VA's Whole Health program includes eight components of proactive health and well-being, including Personal Development. Personal Development includes becoming better at something, such as a talent or skill, and being creative. Becoming better at something increases your options and provides more control in your life. This can help you be happier and healthier.

Creative Art Workshops

From July—September, the Butler VA hosted 19 free creative arts workshops for Veterans, ranging from painting and pottery to creative writing and song writing. The Creative Arts Workshops were held to promote Whole Health to Veterans, with funding made possible by the Office of Patient Centered Care & Cultural Transformation.

Workshop participants were encouraged to submit any art to the local Creative Arts Festival in September where first place winners went on to compete in the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition.

"The art workshops are a great place to express yourself and show some of your hidden talents. I have personally seen Veterans come to these and enjoy doing new things for the first time, as well as some showing a talent that we didn't know that they had!"

- U.S. Army Veteran Cheryl Schaefer



Veterans Advance to National Creative Arts Competition

Almost 40 pieces of artwork submitted by local Veterans were submitted and on display at the Butler VA Health Care System this fall for the first ever Butler VA Creative Arts Festival. 23 of those pieces advanced to the national judging process.

VA medical facilities incorporate creative arts into their therapy programs to further the rehabilitation for both inpatients and outpatients. This competition recognizes the progress and recovery made through that therapy and raises the visibility of the creative achievements of our Nation's Veterans.



Drumming for Veterans

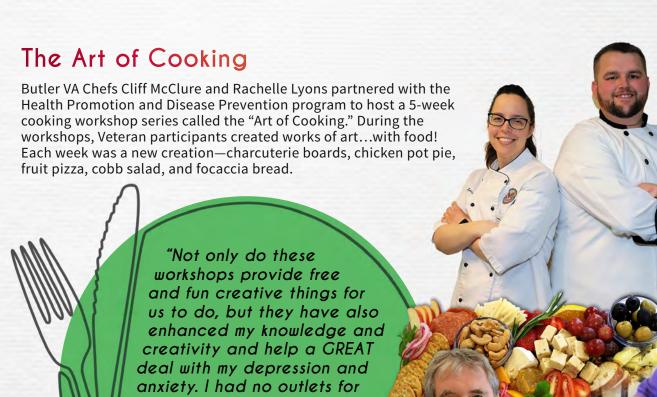
Drumming has positive benefits for both mental and physical health according to research. It accelerates physical healing, boosts the immune system, reduces tension, anxiety, helps alleviate symptoms of PTSD, stress, and aids in better therapy-based communication with mental health professionals.

Veteran residents in the Sergeant Joseph George Kusick VA Community Living Center (CLC) were offered a new wellness option starting in the summer of 2021 (now offered monthly) called DrumFIT. DrumFIT is a customizable music, motion, and memory program suitable for a wide range of ability levels, from sitting to standing, with varying intensity, ensuring that everyone can have access to the benefits of this unique cardio program.

In addition to DrumFIT for Veteran residents, all Veterans were able to participate in a free, weekly class called "One Beat at a Time" thanks to a partnership with the Butler YMCA this summer.

"DrumFIT was an excellent mental and physical exercise that was fun and didn't actually feel like exercise." - CLC Veteran resident Michael Latsko





my creativity outside of home, and I so look forward to the workshops."

Trudy Ann Neumann, U.S. Navy Veteran

New Pergola Constructed for Wellness

A new pergola was constructed on the Butler VA's New Castle Road campus for Veterans and their families. A small grand-opening celebration was held in August to commemorate the occasion.

This new space will primarily be used for Veteran's wellness – whether that be a fitness class like yoga, or a creative arts workshop like the Stepping Stones workshop held this past fall.

The space will also provide a new, sheltered location for Veterans and their families (and staff) to enjoy some time outdoors.

Creating Hope

The pandemic has (and continues) to cause unprecedented stress, but the Butler VA is moving forward! All that we have achieved this year provides a dose of hope, both now and for 2022.

Vaccines Create Hope to Defeat COVID-19

Butler VA was one of 13 VA medical centers across the country to receive the first limited supply of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Sites were identified based on need for the vaccine according to CDC's 1A prioritization and capacity to store the vaccine at -20°C.

By March, the Butler VA had administered its 10,000th dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Homer Younkins, Korean War Veteran, received the 10,000th dose during a Butler VA Walk-In Clinic. "I am so happy to receive the vaccine to protect myself and my wife," commented Mr. Younkins.

Also in March, Congress passed the SAVE LIVES Act allowing the Butler VA to expand eligibility for COVID-19 vaccination to include all Veterans, spouses of Veterans, caregivers of Veterans, and CHAMPVA Recipients. The vaccination process was quickly updated to accommodate those identified in the Act and we continue to vaccinate all who wish to receive a vaccine.



Creating a Difference with Words of Affirmation

The Butler VA's Suicide Prevention team organized a special "Words of Affirmation" project for this year's Suicide Prevention Month. Words of affirmation were written with chalk on windows in several key areas of the facility and displayed throughout the month.



"The feedback was more than I could have ever imagined it would be. Many Veterans just stopped and stared in awe, while others shared just how much they needed to read a kind word that day something of substance that really mattered and made a difference."

- Shanea Clancy, the Butler VA's Suicide Prevention Coordinator and the one who created and led this project

Celebrating Major Milestones

This year was a time for hope and celebration at the Butler VA as we recognized several birthday and anniversary milestones.



VA Dental Services celebrated its 100th Anniversary in 2021!The Butler VA Dental Team is passionate about oral health and providing excellent dental care for our Veterans.



Create A Healthier You



Happy 75th birthday to the modern Veterans Health Administration! VHA's early history of caring for our nation's warriors can be traced back to the Civil War. The Butler VA recognized this important milestone all year along.



Four local Veterans turned 100+ years old, and that is surely something to celebrate and give us all hope for the future!





Ralph Kirsch
U.S. Army Veteran
turned 100



Sullivan "Sully"
Cherichetti
U.S. Army Veteran
turned 102



Bill IM

U.S. Army Veteran

turned 102



John Mahler

U.S. Air Force Veteran

turned 103

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Hope and Support for MST Survivors

You.Are.Not.Alone. In April as part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, the Butler VA Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Program hosted multiple events and trainings to raise awareness of sexual assault and show support to MST survivors. A virtual training was held with the Crisis Shelter of Lawrence County. The annual Clothesline Project (t-shirts made by MST survivors) was displayed, as well as participation in a 'denim day.' 387 small flags were also displayed in front of the Butler VA's main facility in a show of support for MST survivors.

A Safe, Clean Space

Your environment can affect your health. It's good to have a safe, comfortable, and healthy space. In fact, that's part of the VA's Whole Health program. With the continuing challenges of COVID-19, Butler's EMS and Laundry teams ensured all Veterans had a healthy space. For example, all discharged rooms were double cleaned, the Community Living Center was thoroughly sanitized daily, and special precautions were taken for items such as trash, used mops, etc. Laundry services worked around the clock at times making sure gowns were cleaned and restocked daily. They also ziplocked 12 boxes of 500 cloth masks individually to handout to Veterans at the main facility and outpatient clinics, and made 800 cloth masks for staff.

Creating Connections

A sense of community—of connection with others— can help ward off loneliness, stress and anxiety, especially if you're separated from family and friends due to the pandemic. This year, the Butler VA looked at new ways to create connections, both in-person and virtual, to enhance Veterans' physical, mental and social well-being.

Constructing Special Family Visitation Booths

The Butler VA's Facility Management Team built special visitation booths at the Sergeant Joseph George Kusick Community Living Center (CLC) to allow families to visit safely with their loved ones. The booths were constructed with heat, air conditioning, and an intercom system to allow the Veteran and families to speak freely to one another. Families call to schedule a visit, and there are several time frames throughout the day, including evenings, weekends, and holidays to accommodate everyone. The booths are in use daily, allowing Veterans and families to regularly connect, safely.



Connecting Caregivers with VA and Community Support

In-person and virtual support was available this year to approximately 200 local caregivers. In August, over 20 caregivers attended a Caregiver and Family Resource Fair that included VA resources, as well as resources from thirteen local community partners. Additionally, a virtual reality relaxation headset to enjoy the sights and sounds of the beach was available, and Butler VA Chefs provided cooking demonstrations. Caregivers were able to attend the event in-person, while a small, Adult Day Health Care program was held for their Veterans with care and activities provided by VA staff.



"Once a month, at least, there's something going on to support us as caregivers. I have never seen anything like this in the public sector. And, they are always there for me. I just need to call and ask. If they don't know, they find out and call me back. The Butler VA Caregiver Support program is so wonderful. Some people just do their jobs, these people care. It's a different feeling here. They really care about helping the caregiver as well as the Veteran."

Laurel BeitsingerFamily Caregiver

Virtually MOVE!-ing this Year

Nutrition and Food Service (NFS) at the Butler VA utilized technology to connect with Veterans in various groups, classes, and individual appointments.

The MOVE! Program is a 16-week weight management program.
The MOVE! groups met virtually through VA Video Connect (VVC).
Seven MOVE! group sessions are held on a weekly basis, including an all-women Veterans group. Overall, there were 96 Veterans who attended the VVC MOVE! group with a total of 355 pounds lost for fiscal year 2021. Be Active and MOVE! (BAAM), an extension of the MOVE! program, which is a physical activity group led by an instructor through VVC was offered twice a week. In total, the BAAM Veterans attended 379 classes. One Veteran attended 87 classes alone!



Creating a renewed sense of community was the theme this year in the Voluntary Services Department. With COVID-19 restrictions lessened (some), volunteers were able to come back and help in key areas such as the COVID-19 vaccination clinics where 16 volunteers greeted and screened Veterans, their spouses and/or caregivers, and others under the SAVE LIVES Act.

Volunteer drivers were back in the driver's seat transporting 1,192 Veterans and creating 85,720 miles of positive engagements and opportunities of care for our Veterans. A Renaissance Revival of community engagement saw individuals, community organizations, and businesses supporting the Emergency Food Pantry, special events, and opportunities to thank Veterans for their service.



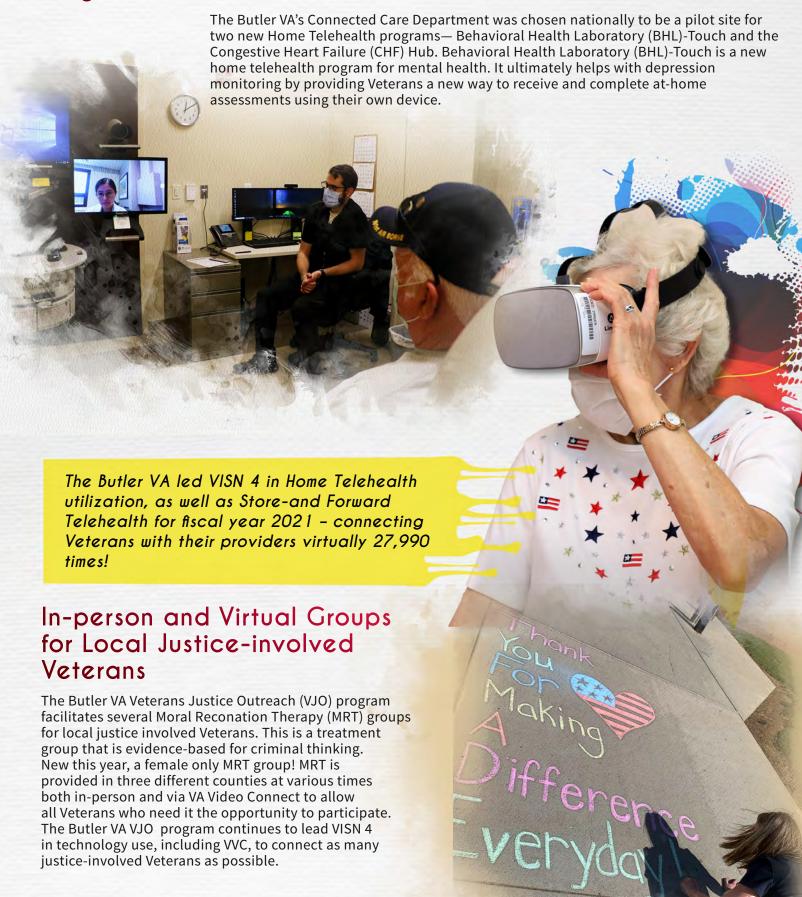
The Taking Charge of My Life and Health (TCMLH) for Healthcare for Homeless Veteran (HCHV) program was implemented this year. TCMLH-HCHV is a group-based program designed to support Veterans

to connect with what matters most in life and to build an empowered approach to their health and wellbeing.

The central goal of HCHV is to reduce homelessness among Veterans by conducting outreach to those who are the most vulnerable and not currently receiving services and engaging them in treatment and rehabilitative programs. TCMLH builds a supportive, inclusive, and open space for Veterans to feel comfortable and supported in talking about what matters most to them.

The Veterans participating in this new course are receiving housing support and services from Butler VA and the program is offered as a supportive forum for positive change.

Butler Chosen as Pilot Site for New Home Telehealth Programs





First Student Nursing Mentorship Program

The first Butler County Community College (BC3) Student Mentorship Program began this year. The selected student completed 96 hours of mentoring with an assigned Registered Nurse (RN) in the Butler VA's Primary Care Department. A mentoring program was developed that is currently used in Primary Care for RNs, and that met the expectations of the BC3 Nursing School Dean.

Virtual Care Education—including a Best Practice for VISN 4

Virtual health care is convenient and safe. With over 27,000 visits being conducted virtually in fiscal year 2021, the Butler VA's Connected Care Department focused on educating staff, Veterans, and the community on virtual care opportunities provided by the Butler VA.

- o A 'refresh' education program on all virtual care modalities to review new changes and reinforce current processes was implemented within the Primary Care Department.
- Demonstrations, such as VA Video Connect were provided to the Butler Area Leadership group and the local Veterans Input (VIP) committee.
- The New Employee Orientation education program was enhanced to include all aspects of connected care by creating and providing a detailed training on each service for every new employee. This was presented as a Best Practice to VISN 4 to share with other sites for implementation of a similar practice.

New Nutrition and Lactation Education for Women Veterans

To better meet the needs of the growing number of women Veterans at Butler, a new Registered Dietitian and Certified Lactation Counselor (CLC) was hired this year. As a Women's Health Dietitian, she provides nutrition education and assists with meal planning for all interested women Veterans. As a CLC, she provides education and assistance with lactation and breastfeeding. A women Veterans-only MOVE! group also continued this past year and provides weekly support, accountability, and education to make healthy lifestyle changes.

Community Training for Justice-involved Veterans

The Butler VA's Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) program provided education, outreach and resources at the Crisis Intervention Training in both Clarion and Butler counties in fiscal year 2021. This is a week-long training for first responders including police officers, crisis workers and correctional employees. The VJO program provided a three-hour training in each of these counties on VA services and resources, PTSD, TBI, readjustment considerations, and facts related to the justice-involved Veteran population.

Supporting Local Student Veterans

The Butler VA's Post 9/11 Military 2 VA Case Management program continued providing services to Post 9/11 Veterans both onsite and virtually throughout this past year. The team also dedicated its efforts to the Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) program to support local student Veterans at Butler County Community College, Slippery Rock and Clarion University. The team is available virtually to the schools and student Veterans to assist with any physical or mental health issues, and overall aspects of transitioning to this new student (and sometimes virtual student) environment.

Creating Growth



As the needs of our local Veterans and their families grow and change, so do we. Whether its additional virtual care options, an easier to use website, or increased mental health services in light of an ongoing pandemic, the Butler VA is adapting, expanding, and growing.

Increased Mental Health Services at VA Outpatient Clinics

Increasing mental health services at the Butler VA Outpatient Clinics was a priority for fiscal year 2021, both in-person and virtually via Telehealth. New Licensed Clinical Psychotherapists at both the Lawrence and Mercer County VA Clinics allowed for

additional mental health offerings at those locations. A new mental health hub is also available at the Clarion VA Clinic with increased mental health services thanks to telehealth.

A new Anti-coagulation hub was also implemented through connective telehealth for Veterans at the Armstrong, Clarion, and Cranberry VA Clinics for Veterans presently on Coumadin.

Onsite Registration at COVID Clinics

The Butler VA's Registration staff enrolled over 500 new Veterans this fiscal year, 531 to be exact. Registration staff provided onsite support at the COVID clinics to ensure a seamless process of registering Veterans at the point-of-care so they could efficiently receive their vaccines. Additionally, three new Registration staff were brought on to fill vacated positions to ensure high quality enrollment counseling and

Launched All-New Butler VA Website

same day enrollment of qualified applicants.

The Butler VA launched a new website this year that gives Veterans better service and an easier online experience:

https://www.va.gov/butler-health-care/.

The new website provides Veterans, families, and caregivers what they need to prepare for a visit, get care and connect with their VA health care team. There is also a new, complete list of VA health services, social programs, and care coordinators. The new website was built with a mobile-first user experience, meaning users can get to all content and tools in just one or two clicks. It's all part of our continuing work to improve the Veteran experience.



Now Assisting Justice-involved Veterans in 5 counties

The Butler VA continued to have three successful Veterans Treatment Courts in Armstrong, Butler and Mercer counties with a total of 70 Veterans participating in fiscal year 2021. The Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) program continued to work with both Lawrence and Clarion counties on the development of a Veterans Track as part of their already established treatment courts, and both counties have moved forward with this development. This addition provides treatment court options for justice-involved Veterans in all five of the counties the Butler VA serves.





Supporting the Growing Needs of the Veteran LGBTQ+ Community

The process of creating a Transgender/Gender Diverse Clinic to support the growing needs of the LGBTQ+ community was initiated this year. Butler's program has grown from three to 12 Veterans in just two years, and the LGBT+ Veteran Care Coordinator is adding services, programs, and events accordingly. This year the program also participated in its first (virtual) VA Pride event.

Over 500 New Women Veterans Chose the Butler VA this Year

New staff, new women Veterans (over 500 this fiscal year), and new programs helped the Women Veterans Health Care program at the Butler VA grow this year. The Women's Health Team added a new Women's Health Coordinator and Women's Health Dietician. Program additions included new and enhanced screening, tracking, and education, blood pressure monitoring for pregnant women Veterans, and monthly outreach visits to the local communities. The first Facebook Live Women's Health Public Forum was also held, reaching over 400 people.

Whole Health Offerings Expand

Whole Health offerings increased by about 15% this fiscal year, including the introduction of three main employee Whole Health Courses—smoking cessation, creating balance, and nutrition lifestyle. "Whole Health Nuggets" was also introduced in the Center for Behavioral Health, a series focused on how Whole Health can be better implemented in participants' daily lives and clinical daily practice.

The first Whole Health Coach was hired and began offering coaching services to Veterans. The Taking Charge of My Life and Health (TCMLH) for Healthcare for Homeless Veteran (HCHV) program was implemented, and many workshops from Vision Boards to Gratitude Journaling took place for Veterans.

Creating Confidence

Facility Awards, Recognitions, & Statistics

Veterans deserve trust, comfort, and confidence when it comes to their health care. This year, the Butler VA had a trust score of 95.4% and a Respect and Comfort Score of 97.2%. These scores, along with the many awards and recognitions helps confirm that Veterans choose the Butler VA and are confident in that choice.

Nationally Recognized for Tele Neurology Strong Practice

The Butler VA was recognized nationally for a strong practice in providing Tele Neurology to local Veterans. Butler's Referral Coordination Initiative (RCI) partnered with the national TeleNeurology hub in Philadelphia, PA instituting 100% Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) in-house.

Finalist in the 2021 VHA Shark Tank Competition!

David B. Portman PharmD, BCPS and his practice, Fluoroquinolones: A Patient Safety Priority, was a Finalist in the 2021 VHA Shark Tank Competition!



Despite a plethora of safety warnings and concerns, including the first warning of Achilles tendon rupture and the most recent of aortic aneurysm, fluoroquinolones continue to be one of the most common antibiotic classes prescribed in the United States. Through a VISN-wide approach utilizing health care technology, VISN 4 sought to empower prescribers to heed these safety warnings and mitigate patient harm. By using a standardized note in the electronic medical record, VISN 4 implemented an intuitive, simple, and self-sustaining initiative that decreased its outpatient fluoroquinolone prescriptions by 46%.

Employees Recognized at the Excellence in Government Awards Ceremony

This year's Pittsburgh Federal Executive Board (FEB) Excellence in Government Awards Program was held virtually in May.

Congratulations to Ron Betts (QSV) for receiving the Bronze Award for Outstanding Clerical Employee, the Moral Health Action Team as a Distinguished Nominee for Outstanding Small Teams, as well as the many Butler VA staff members that were a part of the VISN 4 DEMPS Team that was recognized with a Silver Award for Outstanding Service to the Public.

200 Customer Service Compliments

The Butler VA's Veteran Experience Office trained over 300 employees to utilize the Patient Advocate Tracking System-Replacement (PATS-R), a web-based tool that reinforces the culture that patient advocacy is the responsibility of every employee. The intent of this model is to support and encourage patient centered service recovery, resolve inquiries more efficiently, and empower each individual involved.

In Fiscal Year 2021, Butler had 1,102 unique cases entered in the PATS-R, resolving 1,423 unique requests. 200 of the inquiries received were compliments for the Butler VA and/or specific employees.

First Place for Go Red Field Challenge

The Butler VA's Women's Health Go Red Program won first place in the 2021 Go Red Field Challenge. The Women's Health Team found new, creative approaches to bring awareness to cardiovascular disease in Women Veterans during Heart Month celebrated every February.



Additional Accolades

- 1. 5-Star Rating for the Sergeant Joseph George Kusick Community Living Center on VA's Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) Report (VA's system of reports used to measure, evaluate and benchmark a facility's quality and efficiency).
- Outstanding Facility Performance (100%)
 Butler also achieved excellence in quality and performance related metrics in 2021, some of which include:
 - 1. SAIL Score 1st quintile
 - · #1 in Diabetes Management
 - #1 in Influenza Immunizations
 - · Top 3 in the Nation for Ischemic Heart
 - · Top 3 in the Nation for Primary Care Mental Health Access
 - · Top 3 in the Nation for Primary Care Mental Health Same Day Appointment
 - · Top 5 in the Nation for Overall Primary Care Provider Rating
- 3. Patient Safety 100% compliance with program requirements including Joint Patient Safety Report and Patient Safety & Alert follow up, Root Cause Analysis, and Patient Safety Assessment Tool Completion

2021 Statistics



Employees who are Veterans: 178

· Volunteers: 72 (active)

· Volunteer hours: 9,520

• Donations: \$92,239.54

· Veterans Served: 22,974

Veteran Outpatient Visits: 214,110

· Visits completed via Telehealth: 21,339

· Operating Budget: \$163,831,269

Operating Beds: 126









About Us

The Butler VA Health Care System, located in Butler County, Pennsylvania has been serving Veterans since 1947. We are the health care choice for over 26,000 Veterans throughout Western Pennsylvania and parts of Ohio and are a member of the VA Healthcare VISN 4 network under the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Butler VA provides comprehensive Veteran care including primary, specialty, and mental health care—as well as management of chronic conditions and social support services to our nation's Veterans. We proudly serve America's Veterans at our main campus on North Duffy Road, our facilities on New Castle Road, as well as at our five Primary Care VA
Outpatient Clinics in Armstrong, Southern Butler County (Cranberry Township),
Clarion, Lawrence and Mercer Counties.

Address

Butler VA Health Care System 353 North Duffy Road, Butler, PA 16001

Contact Info

800.362.8262 724.287.4781 www.va.gov/butler-health-care www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA www.twitter.com/VAButlerPA

Credits:

Paula McCarl Editor-in-Chief

Amanda Kurtz Editor

Karen Dunn Photographer





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